disposed on a front face of the distal portion of the elongate body member.

7. (Amended) A suturing instrument as defined in claim 6, wherein the needle inserts into the needle carrier.

8. (Amended) A suturing instrument as defined in claim 1, wherein the needle catch is positioned such that a distal path segment of the needle carrier's path is intercepted by the needle catch.

9. (Amended) A suturing instrument as defined in claim 2, further comprising a flexible drive member coupling the deployment controller to the needle carrier.

11. (Amended) A suturing instrument comprising:

an elongate body member; and

a distal tip assembly coupled to the elongate body member such that the distal tip assembly is capable of being rotated axially about a longitudinal axis with respect to the elongate body member, the distal tip assembly comprising:

a forward-deploying needle carrier,

a needle catch to receive and retain a needle, and

a forward-directed exit port, wherein the needle catch and the exit port are disposed on a front face of the distal tip assembly.

12. (Amended) A suturing instrument as defined in claim 11, wherein the distal tip assembly is coupled to the elongate body member at a pivot joint such that the distal tip assembly is free to deflect about the pivot joint.

13. (Amended) A method for placing a suture in tissue comprising the steps of:

placing a suturing instrument enclosing a forward-deploying needle carrier including a needle, wherein the forward-deploying needle carrier is movably positioned within a needle carrier channel adjacent tissue to be sutured;

positioning the tissue between a forward-directed exit port, and a needle catch that receives and retains the needle, the exit port and the needle catch being disposed on a front face of a distal end of the suturing instrument;

deploying the forward-deploying needle carrier out of the suturing instrument through the forward-directed exit port; and